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PRESENT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN ARABIA

By Samuel M. Zwemer, F.R.G.S.

Arabia, which designated by the great geographer, Ritter, as being at "the antipodes of progress," and characterized by him as the "anti-industrial centre of the world," is once more coming to the front. The general unrest of the Moslem world, social, political and religious, has also reached the Arabs of the Peninsula, and events are taking place within its borders and along its coasts which are full of importance to a right understanding of the problems in the Near East.

Here is a region of Asia larger in area than India proper; indeed, the largest peninsular projection of any continent, which has produced the greatest of all rivals to the Christian creed, and lies along the main highway of international commerce, yet scarcely more than once a year does an event within its borders receive more than a passing mention in the press.

And this is not without reason as Arabia is in a peculiar sense a great unknown land. In writing concerning it, the first difficulty, and one than can hardly be avoided, is that we must deal so largely with unknown quantities. Not only from a geographical point of view, but in regard to recent history and politics Arabia is largely unknown. Mr. David George Hogarth, the latest authority, says:

From certain scientific points of view hardly anything in Arabia is known. Not a one-hundreth part of the peninsula has been methodically surveyed. The altitude of scarcely a single point, even on the coast, has been fixed by an exact process, and we depend on little more than guesses for all points in the interior. Between the innermost points reached by the Europeans in their attempts to penetrate it, intervenes a dark space of 650 miles span from north to south, and 850 from west to east. This unseen area covers considerably more than half a million square miles, or not much less than half the whole superficies of Arabia.

For knowledge of the interior we depend almost wholly on the testimony of less than a score of travelers who paid a big price to penetrate the neglected peninsula. The record of their travels is a testimony to the difficulties that must be met in exploring this region. Niebuhr alone of all his party returned to tell of Yemen; the rest died of fever and exposure. Huber was murdered by Bedouins and his journal published after his death. Seetzen was murdered near Taiz and Manzoni shot with his own rifle by a treacherous companion. Bent died from the effects of the Hadramaut climate, and Von Wrede, after suffering everything to reach the Ahkaf, returned to Europe to be scoffed at and his strange story labeled a romance! Only years after his tragic death was it corroborated. And Doughty, the chief among Arabian explorers, was turned out of Nejd, sick and penniless, to trudge on foot with a caravan hundreds of miles and to be betrayed near Mecca, escaping by the skin of his teeth.

Almost all of the south-central half of Arabia is, according to native report, occupied by a vast wilderness generally called Ruba-el-Khali—the empty abode. No European has ever entered this immense tract, which embraces some 500,000 square miles, although three travelers, Wellsted in 1836, Von Wrede in 1843, and Joseph Halevy in 1870, with intrepid boldness gazed on its uttermost fringes from the west, south and east respectively. Some Arabian maps show caravan tracks running through the heart of this desert from Hadramaut to Muscat and Riadh. For the rest we have only vague reports at second hand in regard to this whole mysterious region. Burton and Doughty expressed the opinion that an explorer might perhaps cross this waterless territory in early spring with she-camels giving full milk, but it would take a bold man to venture out for the passage of 850 miles west to east, or 650 miles north to south, through this zone of the world's greatest heat, to discover the unknown in Arabia. Such an enterprise, although of value to geography would count for little or nothing in the investigation of race development and yet who knows whether this region may not have ruins of former civilization, or remnants of half-pagan tribes?

There are, however, other districts in Arabia which are not desert, but inhabited by large tribes and in some cases containing groups of villages and smaller cities which have never been seen by western eyes. The biggest geographical feat left for a traveler to perform in all Asia is to get across the Yemen, on to Nejran and pass from thence along the Wady Dauasir to Aflaj and Nejd. We know that this journey is followed by Arab caravans, and I met many of the Arabs from that district on my first and second visit to Sanaa in Yemen. There are plenty of wells and the journey would lead through a long palm tract of over 100 miles march in its early stages.

In regard to recent exploration we may note two names. Professor Alois Musil penetrated North Arabia in 1908-09, removing some of the blank spaces from the maps between Bagdad and Damascus, but experienced the greatest difficulties. His journeys were all carried out under incessant alarm from robber bands or hostile tribes. On his second excursion which was directed eastward, Musil was stabbed in the back by a lance and in the breast by a knife, while with his attendants he was stripped of everything down to his shirt. It was only his familiarity with languages and manners and the friendly relations he had established on former journeys, that got him out of this and similar awkward predicaments. He suffered also at the hands of thievish guides, whilst even worse difficulties were caused by the climate and by the badness of the drinking water, which more than once laid him on a bed of sickness. He passed nights in the open where the temperature varied from 80°.5 to 23° Fahr., and these would be followed by days with an air-temperature of 115° Fahr. Early on December 10, as told by him in a preliminary report to the Vienna Academy of Sciences, he had difficulty in adjusting his head-cloth and blanket, so hard were they frozen, while his men hardly dared take hold of the water-bottles for fear of their breaking. After sunrise they warmed them by the fire; for to have kindled a fire earlier might have exposed the party to attack. On the third excursion, which, starting in the southwest part of the region under examination, proceeded southwards, it was with great difficulty that

he found a guide. Nobody was willing to accompany him in these "Death paths" which, following on a ride through the desolate black desert of el-Bseita, led into the defiles of the westerly arm of the sandy desert of Nefud.

A year earlier, Douglas Carruthers, an English naturalist, also attempted to enter Central Arabia. His object was to cross the Nafud desert but he was compelled to return, reaching Teima in the south of that region. He succeeded, however, in getting through a considerable area of new territory. He found many inhabited places in the blank area which is found in our maps between Ma'an, Jowf and Teima. He says this country is not all hostile desert, but in many places good grazing land with plenty of game. He was the first European to set eyes on the western edge of the Great Nafud. It is evident from the above record of recent exploration that we must rely on rumor or the passing visit of a traveler in regard to the movements of politics in Central Arabia since there is so little Western contact with the interior provinces. Of the real condition of affairs in Nejd or Riyadh for example even those who live on the coast are often in ignorance, except for hearsay and native report, and yet it was in this very part of Arabia that one of the most significant movements in Islam took its rise a century ago. The influence of this Wahabi revival on Islam not only in Arabia but even in India and in Africa and its subsequent development through the Moslem brotherhoods are well known. The chief strongholds of the old sect are still along the coast of the Persian Gulf, in Oman and also in Ajman and the Wady Dauasir. In the latter place they continue in all their old-time beliefs and fanaticism so as to be a proverb among the Arabs.

The effect of the Wahabi movement was felt throughout the entire peninsula. It built a wall of fanaticism around the old Wahabi states, prevented exploration and travel, and postponed the opening of the doors to civilization in that part of the peninsula. Most of all, this movement intensified the race hatred already existing between the Turks and the Arabs, which is one of the chief factors in the Arabian problem.

In order to understand this problem and its relation to that of the nearer East it is important first to sketch briefly the present geographical and political conditions of the main divisions of the peninsula, together with their distinctive characteristics. Arabia is not a unit; and because this is often forgotten we treat the seven chief provinces Hejaz, Yemen, Hadramaut, Oman, Hasa, Irak and Nejd, somewhat distinctively.

Hejaz, the Holyland of Arabia, includes the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina. Yemen is bounded by the line of fertility on the north and east so as to include the important region of Asir. Hadramaut has no clearly defined boundaries and stretches northward to the unknown region of the Dahna. Oman is the peninsula between the southern shore of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean, while Hasa covers the entire coast district north of El-Katar peninsula (on some maps called El-Bahrein). Irak-Arabi or Irak is the northern river-country, politically corresponding to what is called "Turkish-Arabia" or the Bagdad and Busrah vilayets.

As to the present division of political power in Arabia, it is sufficient here to note that the Sinai peninsula and the 200 miles coast south of the Gulf of Akaba are Egyptian; Hejaz, Yemen and Hasa are nominally Turkish provinces, but their political boundaries are shifting and uncertain. The present Shereef of Mecca would gladly dictate to the Sublime Porte while the Bedouin tribes even in Hejaz acknowledge neither Sultan nor Shereef and waylay the pilgrim caravans that come to the holy cities or damage the new railway unless they receive large blackmail. In Yemen the Arabs have never ceased to fret under the galling yoke of the Turk since it was put on their shoulders by the capture of Sana in 1873. The insurrection in 1892 was nearly a successful revolution. In 1899 Yemen was again in arms, and revolt against Turkish rule continued until the declaration of the constitution and the change of régime. Present conditions will be described later.

In Hasa, the real sovereignty of Turkey only exists in three or four towns while all the Bedouin and many of the villagers yield to the Turks neither tribute, obedience nor love.

Irak alone is actually Turkish and yields large revenue. But even here Arab uprisings are frequent. Nominally, however, Turkey holds the fairest province on the south, the religious centers of the west and the fertile northeast of Arabia,—one-fifth of the total area of the peninsula.

The remaining four-fifths of Arabia is independent of Turkey. Great Britain has agencies or consulates at every important center. The postal system of the Persian Gulf is British; the rupee has driven the piastre out of the market, and 95 per cent of the commerce is in English hands. Petty rulers calling themselves Sultans, Ameers or Imams have for centuries divided the land between them. The Sultanate of Oman and the great Nejd-kingdom are the only important governments, but the former lost its glory when its seat of power and influence was transferred to Zanzibar, and has become practically a native state under British protection. Nejd in its widest sense is governed to-day by the Ibn Rashid dynasty. The territory of this ruler is bounded on the south by that of Ibn Saood with its capital at Riadh, and it has for four decades disputed the supremacy of independent Arabia with the Ibn Rashid family.

The only foreign power dominant in Arabia, beside Turkey, is Great Britain. Aden became a British possession in 1839, and since then British influence has extended until it now embraces a district 225 miles long by 50 broad, and a population of perhaps 200,000. Certain islands on the coast, including Perim and Socotra, are also British, while all the independent tribes on the southern coast from Aden to Muscat, and from Muscat to the islands of Bahrein have made exclusive treaties with Great Britain, and are subsidized by annual payments or presents.

This rapid survey of the present political division of Arabia by provinces has already made plain that except for its geographical designation Arabia is far from being a unit. Not only is the country divided politically, but many of the provinces have special physical characteristics which determine, at least in a measure, the character of its population and its future development.

To begin with Oman: This province historically, politi-

cally and geographically, has always been the most isolated part of all Arabia. As regards communication with the other parts of the Arab world, Oman was for centuries past an island with the sea on one side and the desert on the other. In area it is the largest of the provinces and has for many centuries been under independent rulers called Imams and Seyyids. The population is almost wholly Arab, save the few Hindu traders in the coast towns and the slave population which is considerable. The Arab tribes are originally derived from two different stocks, known as the Yemeni and Muadi. These names have changed since the beginning of the eighteenth century to Hinani and Ghaffri. The former are the most numerous, yet these two rival races have been in open and continuous feud and antagonism for centuries, keeping the country in perpetual turmoil. In some of the inland towns they inhabit separate quarters. In the town of Somail, about 50 miles inland from Muscat, a broad road marks the division between the dwelling place of the two clans, yet open hostility sometimes takes place across this street boundary. These two parent stocks are subdivided, as in all Arabia, into many tribes which are again divided into sub-tribes or "houses." In Oman each family group has its own Sheikh. It is interesting to note that very few of the Arabs of Oman are nomadic. Agriculture is carried on in the fertile districts and there are numerous towns of from 3000 to 6000 inhabitants. The Omanese state has steadily declined in power and prosperity since the beginning of the last century. At that time the Sultans of Muscat exercised rule as far as Bahrein to the northwest, had possession of part of the Persian Coast and called Zanzibar their own. At this time the Oman Arabs began their extensive journeys in Africa and, urged by the enormous profits of the slave trade, explored every part of the continent. When that traffic was suppressed the prosperity of Oman decreased, and although the present ruler, Seyyid Feysul bin Turki, is nominally independent, his province is practically a native state under British control. In the words of Lord Curzon:

Oman may, indeed, be justifiably regarded as a British dependency. We subsidize its ruler; we dictate its policy; we should tolerate no alien inter-

ference. I have little doubt myself that the time will come . . . when the Union Jack will be seen flying from the castles of Muscat. I should regard the concession of a port upon the Persian Gulf to Russia by any power as a deliberate insult to Great Britain, as a wanton rupture of the status quo and as an international provocation to war; and I should impeach the British minister, who was guilty of acquiescing in such surrender, as a traitor to his country."

The vice-regal visits of Lord Curzon in 1903 left no one in doubt of the firm resolve on the part of the British government to prevent intrusion on the part of any other power in the politics of the Gulf, and especially of Oman. Lord Curzon's voyage with his stately escort of fighting ships was a fitting sequel to the emphatic declaration of Lord Lansdowne in the British parliament that

Any attempt by any foreign power to establish a naval base in the Gulf would be resisted with all the means at our disposal.

The policy of Great Britain in all this part of Arabia and her legitimate claim to supremacy cannot be expressed in briefer or stronger words than those used by Lord Curzon in his address to the chiefs of the Pirate Coast in Northern Oman, than which no part of Arabia boasts a record more sanguinary, with naval blockades, sieges and sacking of towns, more inter-tribal wars and the murder of relatives and rivals for chieftainship.

"Chiefs," said the Viceroy, "your fathers and grandfathers before you have doubtless told you of the history of the past. You know that a hundred years ago there were constant troubles and fighting in the Gulf; almost every man was a marauder or a pirate; kidnapping and slave-trading flourished; fighting and bloodshed went on without stint or respite; no ship could put out to sea without fear of attack; the pearl fishery was a scene of annual conflict; of peace there was none. Then it was that the British government intervened and said that, in the interests of its own subjects and traders and of its legitimate influence in the seas that wash the Indian coasts, this state of affairs must not continue . . . Chiefs, out of the relations that were thus created, and which by your own consent constituted the British government to be guardian of inter-tribal peace, there grew up political ties between the government of India and yourselves whereby the British government became your overlords and protectors and you have relations with no other Power. Every one of the States, known as the Trucial States, has bound itself, as you know, not to enter into any agreement or correspondence with any other Power; not to admit the agent of any other government; and not to part with any portion of its territories. These engagements are binding on every one of you, and you have faithfully adhered to them. They are also binding in their reciprocal effect upon the British

government, and as long as they are faithfully observed by the Chiefs there is no fear that any one else will be allowed to tamper with your rights or liberties. Sometimes I think that the record of the past is in danger of being forgotten, and there are persons who ask, Why should Great Britain continue to exercise these powers? The history of your States and of your families and the present condition of the Gulf are the answer. We were here before any other Power in modern times had shown its face in these waters. We found strife and we have created order. It was our commerce as well as your security that was threatened and called for protection. At every port along these coasts the subjects of the King of England still reside and trade. The great Empire of India, which it is our duty to defend, lies almost at your gates. We saved you from extinction at the hands of your neighbors; we opened these seas to the ships of all nations and enabled their flags to fly in peace. We have not seized or held your territory; we have not destroyed your independence, but we have preserved it. We are not going to throw away this century of costly and triumphant enterprise; *we shall not wipe out the most unselfish page in history.*"

No one can impartially study the history of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf without endorsing these last words. The great benefits that have followed the treaties of peace with the Arabs of Oman are manifest most of all by a comparison of that part of the Arabian Coast with the long stretches of country between Katif and Busrah or along the Red Sea which are Turkish. The former enjoy peace and the tribes have settled down to commerce and fishing and date culture. There is safety for the traveler nearly everywhere and wealth is increasing. The latter are in a continual state of warfare, there is very little commerce or agriculture and the entire coast is unsafe because of the *laissez faire* policy of Turkey for many decades.

Were British protection and intervention to extend beyond the coast there is every reason to believe that the interior of Oman would also be pacified and a large extent of country find agricultural prosperity. Recent events all point to such a political issue and the day may not be far distant "when the Union Jack will be seen flying from the castles of Muscat" and Oman become altogether a British territory.

The evident ambitions of Russia and Germany, not to speak of France, in this part of the Nearer East will be the more stoutly resisted by England since Captain Mahan called attention to the strategic importance of the Gulf in an article published in the National Review, 1902.

The Anglo-Russian Convention signed in September, 1907, in regard to their sphere of influence in Persia, significantly omitted all mention of the Persian Gulf but in the course of the negotiations (to quote from official documents) the Russian government "explicitly stated that they do not deny the special interests of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf."¹

At the head of the Gulf lies the Arab town of Kuwait, the present-day key of international politics in this whole region. Kuwait is the Arabic diminutive form of Kut, which signifies a walled-village, and was settled by Arabs from the Nejd about 150 years ago. It is a town of about 12,000 inhabitants and located on the south side of a fine deep bay 20 miles long east and west and 10 miles broad; this inlet has good holding ground and suitable depth for anchorage even of large steamers. With a few improvements Kuwait would be a splendid harbor and its location at the future terminus of the overland railway gives it strategic importance. When I visited Kuwait in 1894, on the way to Busrah from Bahrein, the town was technically Turkish, although ruled by an Arab chief. Europeans were looked upon with suspicion and followed about with the curiosity of Moslem fanaticism. Sheikh Mohammed bin Subah was glad to pass me on to Busrah, overland, and so get rid of "the man-with-the-books."

When I made a second visit in 1902 the town was evidently no longer Turkish nor will it ever be such again. One does not have to sit long in an Arab gathering to judge of the degree of political freedom that exists in the town, or to know from which direction the wind of popularity blows. Kuwait was changed. Everything Turkish was at a big discount; even the innocent fez that the Mosul colporteur wore. Everything English was at a premium, and the hammals who could jabber a few words of English looked as proud as if they held a Government position. Into the complicated series of events that began when Mobarek bin Subah killed his elder and younger brothers to make himself sole chief

¹ *The Times*, of London, September 26, 1907.

(1897), and ended when he sought and obtained British protection against the Turks and the Emir of Nejd, I do not desire to enter now. It is a long story of Arab intrigue as well as of diplomacy on the part of England. The result has been very humbling to the Turks and, as far as one can judge, very happy to the inhabitants of Kuwait. And this masterly move of the pieces by Great Britain on the international chess-board in the struggle for the highway of the nations in the Mesopotamian valley has decided the future of that region, as well as of the Bagdad Railway. Germany has been check-mated.

"A foreign power," said Dr. Rohrbach, some years ago in the *Spectator*; "holding the harbor of Kuwait could close or open the entire European trade with India by the Bagdad route in the middle, at the most vital spot. To England as soon as the Bagdad line is running Kuwait would be, if not wholly, very nearly as important a position as the entrance to the Suez Canal. If we do nothing to stop England from holding Kuwait, we virtually renounce in the future the power to turn to our account the immense commercial and political consequences of the Bagdad route to Southern Asia."

According to Dr. Rohrbach, if Germany is to seize the trade which England has hitherto monopolized, now is the time to act, before the Russians carry their railway to Bandar Abbas, whence it will undoubtedly be extended along the Gulf to Bushire and Busrah. He appeals to Germans to remember their diplomatic successes in Siam and on the Yangtze and take their courage in their two hands. To shrink back now from an opportunity so favorable, he urges, would be throwing away a winning card, and he concluded with the words, in emphatic type: "Kuwait must remain Turkish."

It is because of this international jealousy that there is delay in the completion of the Bagdad railway and not only because of financial difficulties. When the Turkish Sultan gave Germany the concession for the Bagdad railway, he also gave the right to hold Turkish soil no less than 12 miles on each side of that railway for 1,200 miles across the whole of North Arabia. And although Germany was disappointed when Great Britain took Kuwait, she is pushing ahead with her railway. On the other hand, Sir William Wilcocks, the wizard of the Nile, has been sent by the Young Turks to build irrigation works in Mesopotamia and flood 3,000,000

desert acres with new life and make the desert to blossom like the rose. It is proposed by some to run a British railway, to be completed in two years, all the way from Bagdad to Damascus and on to Cairo.

All this will have its influence on the future of north Arabia and tend to its rapid economic and social development. In the western province of Hejaz another railway is bringing Arabia into closer touch with the world.

While the Bagdad Railway will not be completed for some years, unless there be more of international agreement and less of political rivalry, the Hejaz railway is already built as far as Medina and is being rapidly extended to Mecca, the capital not only of Arabia, but of Islam. In September 1909 the special correspondent of the *London Times* reported the impressive ceremonies which were held at Medina to celebrate the opening of the railway to the Holy City:

"After performing early morning prayers at the Prophet's tomb, the Imperial Mission wended its way to the station outside the town, and there before sunrise found assembled a vast crowd of Musulmans from all quarters of the globe. Field-Marshal Kiazim Pasha made a short speech, in which he declared himself extremely satisfied with the work of all who had been engaged in the making of the railway. Other notables followed him, and a striking speech was delivered by an Egyptian, Ali Kiamil, who, amid enthusiastic cheers, expressed his rejoicing that the Prophet had not permitted the railway to reach the Holy City before the Khalif had granted a Constitution to the people. Djevad Pasha conveyed to the troops and engineers an official message from the Sultan, expressing his Majesty's satisfaction at the success which had crowned their work, and then officially declared the line open."

The railway station has been built some distance away from the sacred Mosque which contains the tomb of Mohammed and the electric power that is used to light the station also illuminates the tomb of the Prophet every night and so the latest products of western civilization have forced their way into the most secluded part of patriarchal Arabia.

When the Field-Marshal Kiazim Pasha was appointed Governor General of Hejaz, the enthusiastic people carried him on their shoulders amid the crowd. At the request of the multitude he stretched out his arm toward the Prophet's tomb and swore that he would do his utmost to complete the line to Mecca, to maintain and enforce respect for the Constitution, and to stamp out injustice.

While pilgrims from Asia Minor and Turkey welcome the construction of the new railway and appreciate its modern conveniences, many of the Arabs doubt the wisdom of opening this new highway and fear it will end as doubtless it will, in disclosing the sacred cities to the gaze of the infidel.

The new railway to Mecca is fitted up with a chapel car in the shape of a mosque. This car allows pilgrims to perform their devotion during the journey and has a minaret six feet high. Around the sides are verses from the Koran; a chart at one end indicates the direction of prayer, and at the other end are vessels for the ritual ablutions. Few orthodox Arabs consider such *prayer de-luxe* in accord with Mohammed's teachings and as long as his teaching is the ideal of conduct and the standard of character there must be this clash between modern civilization and the unchangeable standards of Arabian medievalism. We find the same true in Yemen, even after the proclamation of the Constitution. The Arabs will for a long time to come prove a reactionary element in the Ottoman Empire. Considerable stir was caused in Yemen a year ago by the appearance of a new Mahdi named Seyid Mehmed. This man from the Sudan whose followers are said to number 25,000 preaches the regeneration of the world by a return to the old Islam, and the Turkish authorities have had to despatch five battalions of infantry to his district to preserve order. Although at first there was enthusiasm in this part of Arabia for the new Constitution, reaction has set in. This together with the fact that the two Imams at Sana are again disputing with each other does not indicate peace for Yemen. While the town Arabs in the Turkish provinces are merely suspicious of the new Constitution and the new régime, those of the desert are inimical. Arabs are usually content to look no further than their own tribe and sheikh and so concern themselves only with domestic politics. But where their religion is involved they become interested in wider issues. To what extent the present disturbances in Yemen, and in parts of Mesopotamia as well as in Hejaz, however, are a reflection of the feeling that the new Turkish rule is a menace to the old faith, cannot be fully determined.

It will doubtless make the maintenance of peaceful relations with the Arabs a constant difficulty of the future for the Turkish government. Such are the present political conditions in the Turkish provinces of Arabia.

We turn now to the large district on the south named Hadramaut, one of the least known regions in Arabia. Since Aden was occupied by the English in 1839, their influence and authority have practically extended along the whole south coast of Arabia. The coast has been surveyed and the interior partly explored. Makallah has now communication with Aden by steamers, and an Indian post-office has been opened there.

Both in their architecture and domestic arts the Arabs of Hadramaut show that their ancestors were civilized in the days when the Arabs of Mecca and Medina were in ignorance. The old empire of the Himyarites has left its record not only on the rocks in hundreds of inscriptions but on the language and customs of the people. Add to this the long influence of trade with India and the Malay archipelago, and one can understand why South Arabia is so far on the road to civilization.

Nearly all the wealthy Arabs of Java and Sumatra came from Hadramaut, and Van den Berg traces the intimate relations that continue to exist between these countries to the original conquests of Islam in the Malay archipelago by Hadramaut Arabs. The population of the country may be divided into four classes. First, there are the large tribes of nomads or Bedouins scattered all over the land, who do the carrying trade or are soldiers for the town-dwellers. Although their low state of civilization makes them nearest the nomads, they never live in tents, as do the the Arabs of the north. The rich have houses and the poor live in caves. Second, there are the town Arabs, of better if not purer stock. Many have East-Indian blood, as the Hadramis have intermarried with the Javanese for centuries. They live in the town and own the larger part of the fertile lands. Between them and the Bedouins there are frequent feuds. The third class are called Seyyids and Sherifs, a sort of aristocratic hierarchy, who trace their descent from Mo-

hammed. Their influence is enormous; they have considerable wealth, and are the custodians of education and learning. Although they are conservative and oppose all external influence in their country, they are on the side of law and order. The fourth class are the negro slaves; although not as numerous as in Oman, they are found everywhere and multiply rapidly. The Arabs of eastern Hadramaut are nearly all of the first class. Their country has few oases, and the inhabitants are very poor. In stature the Mahrahs are almost dwarfs; for dress they only wear a loin-cloth. Extreme poverty and misery are the lot of those who dwell on the coasts but Western Hadramaut is, like Yemen, a country of mountain villages, agriculture and prosperity.

Nejd, the heart of Arabia, has had no peace between the warring factions of Ibn Rashid and Ibn Saud for nearly a century. About five years ago Abdul Aziz the Sultan of Hail died leaving three sons named Metaab, Mishaal and Mahomet. The oldest of them succeeded to the rule of Nejd, but his three second cousins plotted to overthrow the government. Inviting him and his two younger brothers to a sort of picnic outside the town, they killed Mohamet and his brothers, except the youngest who was badly wounded. The three scoundrels, however, some months after, fearing the boy would recover went with six slaves to the house of his sister and cut the poor fellow in pieces before her eyes. After this outrage Sultan Ibn Rashid, the oldest of the three cousins became supreme at Hail. Since then he himself has been murdered and Saood and Feysul have in their turn been captured and imprisoned by the uncle of the infant son left by Metaab. Turkey claims the suzerainty over the Ibn Rashid family, but can not easily establish her authority.

I have no more recent information in regard to these changes of political ascendancy in Nejd. The last traveler from the west who has seen the ruler of Nejd was Captain S. S. Butler on his journey to Jauf in 1909. Further changes may have taken place but it is not at all probable that the Arabs of Nejd will be satisfied with Turkish rule, even under the reform régime. Their natural love for independence and their hatred of everything that savors of western civiliza-

tion will still for many years prevent Turkey from fulfilling her ambitions and making this part of Arabia in reality what it is only in name, an Ottoman province. The kaleidoscopic character of the political conditions as they exist to-day in the seven provinces of Arabia and which have been briefly sketched above have only emphasized the diverse character of the Arabian problem. The country is not a unit politically and never has been. The only unity of Arabia is that of religion. It is the religion of Islam that at the same time binds together the Arabs in their hatred of foreigners and divides them in their counsels and politics.

As regards the future, there are three factors in the problem: first, that of the independent Arab tribes and their relation to Turkey. Rebellion has become chronic and may at any time threaten to become revolution. In that case a strong leader might once more unite all the Arabs against the Turks and set up an independent Moslem kingdom in Arabia. The railway from Damascus to Mecca is not only a challenge to the other powers on the part of Turkey to keep off Arabia, but was intended to strengthen her military position in the peninsula and prevent such a possible uprising of the Arab tribes.

The second and more important factor for the future is British policy in Arabia. That the whole country owes an immense debt to Great Britain in the past I have already shown. To the outside observer there seems no doubt that her policy is aggressive in the inland of Aden and that many Arabs welcome it. On the coasts, both on the South and on the Persian Gulf, British influence is supreme. But what is the real aim of British policy in Arabia? He who can answer that question can read the future of a large part of the neglected peninsula.

The third factor is Christian missions. I have reserved mentioning this until the last, but to my mind there is no doubt that this will prove the controlling factor in the years to come. While it is inevitable that the advent of western civilization through commerce and politics will modify Moslem thought in Arabia as it has in India and Egypt, it is not to be taken for granted that either of these harbin-

gers of progress is necessarily in conflict with Islam. Christian missions, however, although they have only recently entered Arabia yet prove their efficiency and potency to a degree above the hopes of many. The United Free Church of Scotland with its strong medical mission near Aden, the educational work of the Danish Church in connection with this mission, the work of the Church Missionary Society at Bagdad and that of the American Arabian mission on the Persian Gulf, through schools, hospitals and daily contact with the people, have already borne definite results. Prejudice has been disarmed, and the name of Christian, which was a hissing and a by-word, has become respected and honored. The outlook for missions in Arabia may demand strong faith and a zeal that knows no discouragement, but it is decidedly hopeful.

While it was the opinion of both Doughty and Palgrave, who crossed Arabia and knew its people as few other travelers, that there is no hope for this land in Islam, every one of the thirty-five missionaries now at work believes there is hope for the social and spiritual regeneration of this great country in the Gospel, and after twenty years of missionary effort we gladly endorse the prophetic words of Palgrave:

“When the Koran and Mecca shall have disappeared from Arabia, then, and then, only, can we expect to see the Arab assume that place in the ranks of civilization from which Mohammed and his book have more than any other cause, long held him back.”